

FINAL ROUND INTERVIEW: RORY McILROY
May 8, 2016



Q. On the last hole you said you tried your best to make a 7 and you made 5. Tell us what happened on that second and onward.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, we were waiting on the guys on the green, the wind felt more off the left and it was a perfect 7-iron there, but whenever it was my turn to hit it, it felt like the wind dropped a little bit so it went from a perfect 7 to trying to take a little bit off of 7. Back left pin position, I'm trying to cut it in there to take a little bit off it and it was probably just the wrong shot selection. I obviously should have missed it the other way but I was trying to stay aggressive with it and I smothered it. It started too far left and never really had a chance to come back. It would be nice to have that shot over again and maybe I could have maybe turned an 8-iron in there, that was probably the better shot to play, but I was fortunate for it not to go in the water. Tried to hit it in the water on my third and it stayed up and got it up and down for bogey. So the middle 16 holes were really good, it was 8 under, and the first and the last hole I bogeyed. That was more like it today. I felt like I played better. I made a lot of good swings and putted nicely. Just left myself too much to do after the first three days.

Q. Saying that you're playing better, looking forward to next week and even the next month with the U.S. Open coming up. Are you rising at the right time or do you just think there's some other things you really just need to kind of polish?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I think there's probably some other things -- I mean, that's probably a good way to describe it, there's other things that aren't quite where I want them to be and I feel like just a slight tweak here and there, we'll be able to go into this stretch of golf and ultimately into the U.S. Open in really good form. But I've seen enough positive signs this week to know like I'm on the right track, and obviously ending the week playing the way I did today gives me a lot of confidence going into these next few weeks.

Q. Well, we were hoping from a big Sunday move from Rory McIlroy, we had a little bit of (inaudible) yesterday. 66 today though, you are pretty mad about what happened on 18, but overall what do you take from today's round?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I mean, I take away the (inaudible) at the start and the end. It was a pretty good scorecard. I played well. I drove the ball really well, I hit a lot of better iron shots, converted a lot of chances. I did a lot of things right today. There were two bogeys on the first and 18th. 18 it was just the complete wrong shot selection. I should have probably went with one less club and tried to hit it hard and turn it right to left into that back pin position. I was aiming it a little left of the pin, trying to cut it back with the wind. Just wasn't the right shot to play, but I was a little in between clubs and I felt like that was the best way to maybe get it close and try to make a 3 and I paid the price by not making a good swing. It's been a good day overall and I felt like I had a chance around the middle of the

back nine to post a number but it wasn't quite meant to be.

Q. Out in 33, at this point you started to find your stride and (inaudible)

RORY McILROY: Yeah, here was a good putt on 10. Hit it into the green side bunker where you should miss it. If you miss this pin position right at all it's going to be very hard to get it up and down, so that was a good 4 there to start the back nine.

Q. Then you had to -- as you say, coming off 11 there you had to -- (inaudible) chance for eagle?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I felt like it just slowed down going up that hill. I felt like I hit a decent putt but (inaudible) uphill. And with the greens being quick it's sort of hard to get yourself to give it that little bit of extra. So it was great to get the ball there and obviously an easy 3. I was trying to make 2 but still felt like at that point with the par 5 15th to play I had a good chance. The drive on 15, if I had two shots to take back, the drive on 15 and then the second shot on the last could have been a different story.

Q. Heading into the Green Mile, we know the difficulties with 18 ahead but wonderful drive down there at 16.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, 16 was playing as short as it's played all week so I only had 102 yards to the flag. I got a bit of a fortunate bounce, I pushed that second shot a little bit but got a nice kick off the collar and was able to make 3 there. I was trying to post 10 under par so I needed to birdie the last couple holes. 17 has been playing so difficult this week, it's so hard to (inaudible). And then I was trying to make 3 on 18 to keep aggressive and just didn't quite work out for me.

Q. Final question, taking this into next week now, you take a lot from today surely with two big weeks for you now?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, two big weeks coming up. It's a decent performance here. Looking back on it, the two 73s I shot in the first and third rounds, I probably just left myself a little bit too much to do going into today. So 66 today is a really good score. I'm confident going into the next couple weeks. THE PLAYERS is a place where I do a little bit better each and every year and looking forward to next week with my game rounding into a little bit of form.

Q. Heck of a run today. You bogeyed the first hole but then seven birdies after that. Had a shot I think from the fairway at 18 to get it close but your thoughts on how you played today?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I mean, anytime you walk off the golf course and shoot 66, you can't be too disappointed. But I think in the circumstances having a feeling like I had a chance on the back nine to post a number for the guys to at least think about it, I didn't birdie

the par 5 15th, and then the second shot on 18 I was in between clubs and tried to play the shot that I felt had the best chance to get it close and make 3 and paid the price by not making a good swing.

It's been a good week in terms of I know what I need to work on and I know the things that I am working on seem to be clicking nicely. But I'm pretty confident going into the next couple weeks. I feel like after a run like this I can go into Sawgrass and be pretty confident with where my game's at.

Q. I thought you putted really well, and at 13 and 14 you almost made the eagle putt at 14 and 13 you grazed the edge, you were really close.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, and on 12 as well. I had two great putts at 12 and 13 that didn't drop. I needed to stay aggressive at 14, that was one of the best shots I hit all week. It was exactly how I pictured it, just a nice sort of hard draw off that tee box. There were three good chances to maybe make up a couple of shots and didn't quite do it.

And then even though I played that stretch of holes in 1 under par from 12 to 15, I felt like there was a couple others in there that I could have taken advantage of. I tried to stay aggressive, and it felt like I made a decent swing on 15 and it just leaked a little bit right on me. Where that pin position was today, it was hard if you laid up to get it close to that pin. Made up for it with a birdie on 16 but the last few holes here, obviously very difficult and it's hard to get any shots from them.

Q. Rory, you've improved a lot at Sawgrass the last few times. Are you getting more comfortable with it or does that just never really happen?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I have, I've gotten a lot more comfortable with Sawgrass. I finally accepted that I can't hit driver as much as I would like there. I've always felt that it was a golf course that handcuffed me a little bit. The things that give me an advantage over some of the field, you know, they don't really give me an advantage there. So the first few years I was quite stubborn and still trying to take on a lot of things instead of accepting the fact that I'm going to have to play the course the way everyone else plays it. If I'm going to beat them, I have to beat them with approach shots and good wedge play and putting. I feel like I've accepted the golf course a little bit more. It's a golf course that can frustrate you as well. It's one of those places that you feel like you played well but you walk off, like how did that just get away from me? Yeah, I've learned to at least like the place for that week and accept this is the way I have to play, and the last couple years it's paid off somewhat for me, at least I've improved, and hopefully this year I can go there and improve a little bit again.

Q. Rory, you had some struggles on 18 this week, was there anything specific about how it was playing or just a few loose shots coming in?

RORY McILROY: I feel like 18 played as difficult as it's ever played this week. On Friday, on Friday it was playing really long. I hit driver 4-iron in there and I don't think I've ever hit as

long a club as a 4-iron in there before. With the way the wind was into off the left, you have to start your tee shot pretty close to the water there so it's a tough one. And if you bail out, obviously you don't have a shot. And the same with the second shot. It's one of these holes you're trying to just hit it in the middle of the green and take a 4. As you say, I didn't play it particularly well this week, but it's been good to me over the last few years so I'm not going to complain too much about it.

Q. I know it's a long ways away but with the PGA coming here next year, how much confidence would you have coming into this?

RORY McILROY: Since I heard that the PGA was coming here a few years ago, it's been one that I've -- don't put too much pressure on myself but it's one that I've been earmarking that I feel like it's a really good chance for me. The course is going to change somewhat from now until next year with a couple new holes and they're going to put new grass on the greens. But anytime I walk back here I always feel comfortable. Great memories. I feel like I'll always have a chance to contend and it's definitely one next year, the '17 PGA, I'd love to get my name on that Wanamaker. If I don't win this year, at least for a third time here. I'm pretty -- I'm excited about coming back here for a major championship, put it that way.

Q. Rory, at what point in your round did you realize you could make the leaders think about you, and once you had that moment, what was your mindset?

RORY McILROY: I think when I walked up onto the 12th green and saw that there was three leaders at 8 under par and I was 6 under, I had 14 and 15 to play, which are two very good opportunities, I felt like that's when I could make a run and post a number. Walking onto the 14th tee, I was 6 under par and thinking -- a 7 under par, sorry, and I'm thinking if I could post 10, that would be a really, really good number. At least -- it might not win but it would make the guys think a lot about it.

I birdied 14. I should have birdied 15, that was one that I let get away. And I birdied 16. So there was some opportunities coming in. But I had a number in my head of trying to get to 10 and obviously it didn't quite work out for me. But I feel like I left myself with a little bit too much work to do over the first three days to get shots back going into Sunday. Can't really be too disappointed because I wish I had played better over the first three days and I would have had more of a chance going into today.

Q. What clicked today for you compared to previous days?

RORY McILROY: I think it was a combination of things. I felt a little bit more comfortable with my swing each and every day, which has helped. The course was a little softer today than it was yesterday. They definitely softened the greens a little and slowed the greens down. Yesterday it was so tricky I felt like anything around 70 or under 70 was a really good score, where today at least they give you opportunities to score a little bit better and make birdies.

Yeah, I feel I maybe holed a few more putts today, but for the most part just felt a little more confident with my swing, was able to commit to a few more shots and at least give myself opportunities for birdies because I don't think my greens in regulation were too good over the first three days and I feel like I hit a few more greens today.

Q. Final thing. We spoke prior to Wells Fargo about how you're working with trying to get your club unstuck. Do you feel now that you've had it in competition as you move to THE PLAYERS that things are progressing for you with this golf swing?

RORY McILROY: I think so, yeah. I've hit a lot of shots this week that I've been really happy with, but also hit some shots that I haven't been happy with. Case in point, the second shot on 18 today. So there's a little bit of work to be done and at least I know what I'm doing. When I hit a bad shot, at least I know what it is so I'm working on it. When I get it right, it's good but it will take time. It's first week back, especially under the pressure of competition, you're not going to make great swings all the time. So I've got a few days in between now and THE PLAYERS to work on it some more, and I feel like it's been a step in the right direction this week and hopefully I'll continue to make some forward strides next week at THE PLAYERS and onwards, hopefully the U.S. Open.